



City of Rockville

MEMORANDUM

October 30, 2003

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Jim Wasilak, Chief of Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: Draft East Rockville Neighborhood Plan

The purpose of this session is for the Planning Commission to review the proposed text changes to the East Rockville Neighborhood Plan. The changes are intended to address the public hearing issues that were raised, as well as others that have arisen during the subsequent discussion between the Stonestreet business owners and the East Rockville Advisory Group. The Planning Commission is required to approve the Resolution (See attachment 1), which in turn will approve the Plan with the changes detailed in the draft Addendum and Errata sheet (See Attachment 2). The following is a brief summary of the issues and the response to each.

Stonestreet Redevelopment and Zoning

At the public hearing and in subsequent written testimony, many business owners and property owners in the Stonestreet corridor expressed serious concerns about the ability to continue operating existing businesses if the land in the corridor is rezoned. Although the recommended zone (TC-1) would not allow many of the uses in the I-1 Zone, rezoning does not mean that businesses have to close or relocate. At a minimum, businesses are protected by the nonconforming use provisions in the Zoning Ordinance, which allows previously existing legal uses to continue operations even though the use is no longer permitted in the new zone.

The East Rockville Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group (ERNPAG) and the newly formed East Rockville Business Association (ERBA) met several times to discuss these issues. The direction that was agreed upon is that the Plan should allow for existing businesses to continue operating, while allowing property owners to redevelop per the recommendations in the Plan for mixed-use, Main Street-style development. Although much of the discussion has focused on potential zoning definitions and mechanisms to allow for these concepts to be implemented, the direction now is to clearly articulate the intent of the future zoning provisions in the Plan. The details of permitted uses, potential grandfathering and development standards will be delineated as part of the Implementation Strategies Study that will be undertaken following the adoption of the Plan.

Other Public Hearing Issues

Although most of the public hearing issues were related to Stonestreet redevelopment, there were several that related to other areas. Transportation issues included the feasibility of a traffic circle at Baltimore Road and South Stonestreet Avenue, limitations on parking at Metro, potential sidewalks in the Rockdale subdivision and removal of a “no turn on red” sign when exiting the Metro at South Stonestreet Avenue. No text changes are recommended to the text for the circle, limitations on parking and the no turn signs. The limitations and signs were specifically recommended to address concerns about pedestrian safety and cut-through traffic expressed by neighborhoods. Additional text is recommended to be added to the Plan to clarify that sidewalk would not be installed where right-of-way is insufficient, and that alternatives should be considered to conventional sidewalks in these instances.

Environmental issues were raised, including noise mitigation for the railroad tracks, appropriate tree canopy and creation of open space. The Plan recommendations for enhancing the tree canopy and additional open space was deemed sufficient, and no text changes were recommended. However, text was added to encourage noise-sensitive site design for redevelopment along the railroad tracks.

The text regarding the three retail uses in the neighborhood - Maryvale Market, the Maryvale Center and the Stonestreet Convenience Store – has been revised to reflect the true intent of the Advisory Group’s discussions. The draft Plan recommends elimination of alcoholic beverage sales from all three of these uses.

Other text changes include:

- The addition of a photo of the Croydon Park pumphouse, and further recommended support for historic designation for the building.
- A caveat to indicate that the alignment shown on the maps is conceptual only, and subject to final design and engineering.
- Text added to ensure that there is a generous setback and attractive setting in the vicinity of the proposed traffic circle, which is a primary gateway to East Rockville.

Map Updates and Corrections

Changes to the Plan’s proposed land use map include:

- Public park and open space shown at the Stonestreet/Park traffic circle. This designation has been removed and replaced with the “Mixed Use Development” designation.
- Potential public park site on Crabb Avenue. The Group agreed that the map should be corrected to show the potential park site on the north side of Crabb Avenue, immediately east of the industrial property.

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Attachments

1. Draft Resolution
2. Draft Addendum and Errata Sheet

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